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Hawaii, Japan Sign Sister - State Pact

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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HONOLULU (AP) -- Recalling the tragic collision between a Japanese fishing boat and a U.S. nuclear submarine almost three years ago, officials from Hawaii and Japan are taking steps to foster goodwill.

During a ceremony Friday attended by a delegation from the Ehime prefecture in Japan, Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle and Ehime Gov. Moriyuki Kato signed a sister-state agreement aimed at improving educational, social and cultural relations.

Nine students and teachers from the Uwajima Fisheries High School in Ehime died aboard the training vessel Ehime Maru when the USS Greeneville surfaced beneath the trawler Feb. 9, 2001, sinking the boat in 2,000 feet of water off the island of Oahu.

"It was indeed a sad incident, but the people of Hawaii showed us such warm support," Kato said through a translator. "The people of Ehime will never forget the kind support that you showed them."

Lingle noted that Ehime and Hawaii have formed committees to work on business, educational and cultural exchanges. Both regions have built memorials to honor those killed.

Ehime is on the western coast of Japan's southern island of Shikoku, about 425 miles southwest of Tokyo.